

Gorbachev reassures Bush on ties

MOSCOW (R) — Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev personally reassured U.S. President George Bush Saturday that he was committed to good relations between the superpowers and to democratic reform of his country. The official Soviet News Agency TASS said the two presidents had a long telephone conversation which also covered Middle East peace efforts, disagreements on disarmament and their coming meeting in Moscow. "Its significance was above all that they confirmed their commitment to a common course for improving Soviet-U.S. relations," TASS said. "Gorbachev said that as long as it was reciprocated, his choice in this matter was just as unaltered as his choice for a fundamental democratic transformation of the Soviet state."

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Hrawi sends token force to south

BEIRUT, LEBANON (AP) — The government sent a token army force to South Lebanon Saturday to deploy alongside U.N. peacekeepers near Israel's northern border, military sources reported. The sources said the 650-man unit will initially deploy in the ancient port of Tyre and move into the operational zone of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) once "technical arrangements" were worked out. The move by President Elias Hrawi will raise Lebanese army strength in the flashpoint south to around 3,200 men. The deployment was seen as a symbolic effort by Mr. Hrawi to underline his drive to restore state control over Lebanon under an Arab League-brokered peace plan to end 16 years of civil war. In recent months, the army has taken control of the greater Beirut area, the Druze stronghold in the Shouf mountains southeast of the capital and the Christian heartland to the northeast. That totals about one-fourth of the country. At the same time, most of the major militias have handed over their weapons in a move that is the most positive sign yet that the bloodshed may be over. Mr. Hrawi's deployment in the south also underscores his drive to get the Israelis out of their self-designated "security zone," a 11,100-square-kilometer strip of Lebanese territory they have occupied since 1985.

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Iraq resumes foreign mail service

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq Saturday said it had resumed an international postal service for the first time since the start of the Gulf crisis last August. An official statement said the service would operate three times a week. With no flights leaving Iraq, mail would be taken by road to Jordan and forwarded to other countries aboard Royal Jordanian airlines, the statement said.

Fateh adds two to Central Committee

TUNIS (R) — Fateh, the main group in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), has added two leading moderates to its Central Committee, the body which runs the movement's day-to-day affairs. They are Nabil Shaath, a diplomatic adviser to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, and Abdullah Frangi, who has been the head of the PLO mission in Bonn. Both are accomplished diplomats on the liberal wing of the organisation. They were coopted during a three-day meeting of Fateh's 106-seat Revolutionary Council which ended in Tunis Friday evening, PLO sources said Saturday.

Kuwaitis return home

KUWAIT (R) — Hundreds of Kuwaitis returned home on Saturday at the start of a government airlift of 400,000 citizens who either fled or were abroad when Iraq invaded nine months ago. "There is no place like home, no place. And there is no better 'feeling' than returning home," Abdulkarim Kasseem, holding his child, said as he left the war-scarred airport after a brief flight from Bahrain. He was among the men, women and children aboard the first of hundreds of Kuwait Airways flights that will repatriate Kuwaitis — free of charge — more than 10 weeks after the end of the Gulf war.

Kennedy nephew surrenders to police

PALM BEACH (AP) — William Kennedy Smith surrendered to Palm Beach police Saturday on charges of rape and battery. "I'd like to make a statement, but I first want to take care of this process first," Mr. Smith said as he arrived. His mother, Jean Kennedy Smith, was at his side. Mr. Smith, 30-year-old nephew of Sen. Edward Kennedy, was charged Thursday with sexual battery — tantamount to rape — and with battery in connection with an incident March 30 at the Kennedy family's oceanfront estate. He has denied any wrong doing.

Bessmertnykh visits Lebanon on Tuesday

BEIRUT (R) — Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh will visit Lebanon next Tuesday as part of his current Middle East tour, government sources said. The sources said the Soviet ambassador to Lebanon, Gennady Illichev, informed Lebanese Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Subhi Chamas of the visit. It would be the first visit by a Soviet foreign minister since the start of the civil war in 1975.

FAO to monitor pest spraying in Iraq

ROME (AP) — The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) will monitor aerial spraying of sunn-pests threatening food crops in northern Iraq. The U.N. agency said it will supply the Iraqi government with six specialised Polish pilots and two mechanics. Iraq will supply MI-17 agricultural helicopters, equipment and supplies which will spray endangered wheat and barley crops in areas north of the 36th parallel. FAO said Iraq will be permitted to fly over the northern part of the country on condition that the operation is done under FAO supervision and that the pilots are international and civilian.

Baker in Damascus; Syria says Arabs will insist on their rights

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — U.S. Secretary of State James Baker arrived in Damascus Saturday at the start of his fourth Middle East tour in search of a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He was met on arrival by Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Sharaa and will have talks with President Hafez Al-Assad Sunday before going to Cairo.

En route to Syria, Mr. Baker said Saudi Arabia and its five Arab partners in the Cooperation Council (GCC) will break a "major taboo" and negotiate directly with Israel if there is a Mideast peace conference.

But Mr. Baker said the Gulf countries' participation would be limited to such side issues as water resources and to sending an observer to the opening of the peace conference.

Even so, Mr. Baker hailed the announcement, which culminated two weeks of quiet diplomacy by the Bush administration.

A senior Syrian official told Reuters in an interview that Damascus was ready to cooperate in the peace process from Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar Ben Sultan just before leaving for Syria, the Washington Post reported in Saturday's editions.

An administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Mr. Baker hoped the move would encourage Israel and Syria to compromise their differences over a formula for holding peace talks.

But the official acknowledged: "I don't know whether it will or not."

Mr. Baker is visiting Syria.

Egypt, Jordan and Israel over six days to try to get agreement on how much of a role outsiders might play in the negotiations and which Palestinian Arabs could attend.

It could be his last such attempt.

"At some point you stop flying around," the official said.

The official also disclosed Mr. Baker had tried to work out a deal in which the Arabs would suspend their economic boycott of Israel in exchange for a halt to the construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

"We haven't gotten anything from either side," the official said.

Ahead of what could be crucial talks with Mr. Baker, Syria said Saturday that Arab wanted a just and comprehensive Middle East peace but would not abandon their rights and lands.

A senior Syrian official told Reuters in an interview that Damascus was ready to cooperate in the peace process from Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar Ben Sultan just before leaving for Syria, the Washington Post reported in Saturday's editions.

The official said: "Nothing should prevent the U.N. Security Council adopting appropriate measures to enforce its decision if Israel continues to foil the current peace efforts."

"Nobody should expect Syria or the Arabs to abandon their rights and lands or submit to Israel's expansionist policies."

He said President Assad affirmed during recent talks with Mr. Baker and Soviet Foreign

Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh that "Syria was keen to see a just and comprehensive peace based on U.N. Resolutions especially 242 and 338".

"President Assad also affirmed Syria's readiness to cooperate with international efforts aimed at enforcing international law and adopting the same standards in dealing with hot problems in the region and the world."

This was a reference to enforcing U.N. resolutions on Iraq's occupation of Kuwait last August. Syria wants resolutions against Israel to be pursued with the same vigour.

The official said peace efforts so far are not satisfactory because of Israel's refusal to accept U.N. resolutions calling for withdrawal from occupied Arab lands and endorsing Palestinian rights."

The Syrian official said Israel was ignoring world condemnation of settlements and continuing to put more settlers on Arab territories.

"Firm information shows that there are now over 220,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank," the official said.

"No wise person in the world would expect Arabs to abandon their lands and submit to Israel's obstinacy," he said.

"U.N. resolutions are clear: they condemn settlements, call for Israeli annexation and call for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands in return for peace. There is no alternative for enforcement of these resolutions."

King, Joxe review Mideast, bilateral ties

King, Joxe review Mideast, bilateral ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein received Saturday at Al Nadwa Palace French Defence Minister Pierre Joxe and discussed with him the current situation in the area and Jordanian-French relations.

The audience was attended by Prime Minister Mudar Badran, Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, the King's military secretary and French Ambassador in Amman Denis Bouchard.

Mr. Joxe was received upon arrival by Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Fathi Abu Taleb, several of his assistants, the commander of the Royal Jordanian Air Force, Ambassador Bouchard and the French military attache in Am-

man.

Gen. Abu Taleb welcomed

the French minister and ex-

pressed hope that his talks in

Amman will be fruitful and will

have positive results on the

bilateral relations.

Mr. Joxe expressed satisfac-

tion over the visit, his first to

Jordan.

Mr. Joxe will also be re-

ceived by His Royal Highness

Crown Prince Hassan on

Friday.

Mr. Joxe, appointed defence

minister in January, is ex-

pected to hold a press confer-

ence on Sunday.

Reuter adds: Mr. Joxe arrived

from the United Arab Emi-

rates a day after an uniden-

tified person threw a Molotov

cocktail in a little bottle" at the back gate of the French embassy in Amman, one source said. No one was injured and no damage was caused.

The sources said they sus- pected that Muslim fun-

Bessmertnykh voices cautious optimism

CAIRO (Agencies) — Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh expressed cautious optimism Saturday but warned that failure to arrange a Middle East peace conference would lead to "terrible tragedy."

And despite difficulties, he said, the Soviet Union and the United States are moving together, slowly, towards organ- izing one.

The Soviet minister and his American counterpart, Secretary of State James Baker, who arrives in Cairo Sunday night, have two meetings scheduled in the Egyptian capital on co- sponsoring Israeli-Arab peace negotiations.

On Monday, Egyptian Presi- dent Hosni Mubarak is their host at a working lunch on the proposed conference. Mr. Bessmertnykh spent more than two hours with Mr. Mubarak on Saturday before speaking to reporters.

"There is a chance. There is a hope," said Mr. Bessmertnykh. "And if we work further and if we have agreement of all the parties, then the chance will materialise."

"If it does not materialise — and we can see the alternative — I think it will be a terrible tragedy."

Mr. Bessmertnykh's assess- ment was based on talks with leaders of four countries he has visited since last Wednesday, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt.

"My optimism is natural, but I

am very cautious about saying that (a conference) will definitely materialise. There are problems and difficulties," he said in English.

"We are at the start of a process together with the United States. We are moving. Maybe slowly, but we are moving... I can't tell you that we are going to have a conference, but we hope to have one."

Mr. Bessmertnykh gave no de- tails of difficulties obstructing the peace-making process.

The Soviet Union and the United States have agreed to co- sponsor the conference but im- portant details, such as the U.N. role and Palestinian representation, are still in dispute.

Mr. Bessmertnykh, the first Soviet official to visit Israel since Moscow severed ties in 1967, angered Israelis this week by refusing to rule out restrictions on Soviet Jewish emigration unless Israel stopped building new settlements.

Washington and Moscow have both said the new Jewish settle- ments in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are an obstacle to peace.

But shortly after Mr. Bessmertnykh left for Cairo, Israeli television reported a government drive to link the settlements with Israel proper (see page 2).

About 250,000 Soviet Jews

(Continued on page 5)

GCC states to join talks with Israel

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

As he returned to the Middle East Saturday, Mr. Baker said the GCC states will negotiate directly with Israel in a Middle East peace conference on such side issues as arms control and water resources.

Mr. Khatier confirmed this and the GCC's agreement to send an observer to the conference's opening session.

"In realisation of the efforts of Mr. Baker it (the GCC) has expressed its readiness to participate in the conference as an

Nablus Friday night, in which three youths were wounded in the limb by army gunfire, reports said.

Four other Arabs were struck by gunfire shot in response to stoning protests in nearby Jenin, they added.

At least 11 other Palestinians suffered gunshot wounds during four stone-throwing protests Friday night and Saturday in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, Arab reports said.

In still another incident, sol- diers in helicopters and on foot conducted house-to-house search and scoured the hillsides for "suspects," detaining four, the reports added.

The dead youth was identified by Arab sources as Ahmad Hasan Shaalan, 15, from Ain Bet Illa refugee camp near the West Bank city of Nablus. He was among a group of youths who allegedly fled orders to halt for questioning, the army said Saturday.

Shaalan is the 825th Palestinian killed by Israelis in the 4-month Palestinian uprising.

Protests were also reported Saturday in Gaza, where four youths were injured by gunfire in the southern town of Rafah after they stoned a military outpost.

The army clamped a curfew on central Bethlehem in the West Bank including the area around the Church of the Nativity.

Traditional held to be the birth-

place of Jesus Christ. The move followed early morning clashes in which no one was injured.

Shehie refugee camp, near Bethlehem, remained under curfew for a third successive day.

Palestinian shot dead, 11 injured

(Continued on page 5)

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli soldiers fatally shot a Palestinian teen-ager during a chase after youths who allegedly fled orders to halt for questioning, the army said Saturday.

The refugees fled their homes in March to escape the Kurdish rebellion in the wake of the Gulf war.

In an effort to avoid a con- frontation and speed the with- drawal of the 10,000 U.S. soldiers

protecting the Kurds, Secretary of State James Baker said Friday that the United States may ask the U.N. Security Council to authorise a police force in the area despite Iraq's objections (See page 2).

To begin Operation Gallant Provider, allied soldiers put re- fugees on trucks and buses Saturday at a way station near the largest Turkish refugee camp, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

After the April 24 session with President Saddam, Mr. Talabani said there was agreement "in principle" to stop the Kurdish rebellion in exchange for full autonomy for Iraq's 3.5 million Kurds.

"The movement of the trucks themselves will be a catalytic factor," said Joseph Farmer, a spokesman for the U.S. forces.

The buses and trucks were leaving from Kanimasi, an allied way-station near the Turkish-Iraqi border, one of nine such stations where refugees can find a lift and necessary medical care and food.

U.S. "warning"

The United States Friday said Iraq should reconsider its opposition to a United Nations police force to protect the refugees and renewed its warning that a failure to do so could prolong international economic sanctions.

Perez de Cuellar: No U.N. force without council okay

UNITED NATIONS (R) — U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said Friday that sending armed U.N. police to Iraq to protect Kurdish refugees would require Security Council action, whether or not Baghdad opposed the force.

"In this case of the police presence, I cannot do it without the consent of the Iraqis and they have rejected it," he told reporters. "For (me) to send any military presence a Security Council resolution is needed."

Mr. Perez de Cuellar indicated Resolution 688 on aid to Kurdish refugees was not sufficient to mandate an armed U.N. police force, whether Baghdad agreed to one or not.

"I am not entitled as secretary-general to send any armed personnel to any region without the consent of the Security Council," he said. "As secretary-general of the United Nations I know what we can do and what we cannot do."

Resolution 688 is often cited by U.S. British officials as authorisation for the allied troops setting up "safe havens" in Iraq to aid Kurdish refugees as well as for a U.N. police force. U.N. legal experts have disagreed with both interpretations.

But the U.N. chief urged "patience," saying there was a possibility the council still could set up an operation in northern Iraq.

Algeria's Islamists promise to try, expropriate former leaders

ALGIERS (R) — The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Algeria's largest opposition party, has promised to prosecute former state officials and expropriate their property if it wins parliamentary elections in June.

Ali Belhadj, the radical fundamentalist who is number two in the FIS, said a FIS government would use their property to help pay off Algeria's foreign debts.

"We are going to bring in all the thieves and sell everything they own to pay off the debt. There will be no forgiveness towards them. They (ministers and army leaders) will be tried for killing and torturing Muslims," he told a rally in the provincial town of Blida Friday evening.

He said the prosecutions would cover leading government figures since Algeria's independence in 1962 and specifically mentioned former Interior Minister Hedi Kherdi and retired army General Mohammad Attiaoui.

Both men were in office during a government campaign against the underground Islamic movement in the 1980s and during the riots of October 1988, when more than 150 people were killed, mainly by the army.

The president of the FIS, Abbas Madani, told the same rally he still planned to organise a national strike to demand that President Chadli Benjedid resign, saying he was an obstacle to the political development of the country.

"President Benjedid must be replaced. We do not want to replace him through a coup d'etat... but through a total strike where we will come out on the streets and all economic activity will be paralysed," he said.

The crowds cried "enemy of God" in response, referring to the president.

Hachemi Sahnouni, another FIS leader, said the front would take part in the elections despite reservations about the government's will to make the voting free and fair.

"The U.S. could explore another way, together with the French and British," he said without explaining further.

Allied ambassadors have been reluctant to impose a U.N. police force on Iraq through a resolution because of reservations by the Soviet Union and China. But they expect these would be removed if Iraq consented to the force.

In Washington, State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said the United States wanted Iraq to reconsider its rejection of the U.N. police force idea.

He said U.N. Ambassador Thomas Pickering met with Iraqi envoy Abdul Amir Al Anbari to explain "the importance of Iraqi cooperation with the United Nations in this effort."

U.S. officials were hoping Mr. Perez de Cuellar's envoy for refugees in the region, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, would persuade them to at least accept U.N. police protection for international relief workers. He is meeting with Iraqi official at the weekend.

"It doesn't really protect the Kurds enough but perhaps with enough international U.N. people on the scene their presence would do the trick," one U.S. official said. If so, a resolution or acceptance by council members would not be difficult.

The secretary-general was also

asked if the United Nations, which is to take over the allied refugee camps, could ensure the safety of the Kurds without a police force.

"The real problem is that we want the Kurds to go to their homes, their houses and their villages," he said, adding that some believed they would not feel secure without a military presence.

The United Nations is prepared to do everything, as we are doing everything, in order to protect them and to help them. But if they don't consider that the U.N. civilian presence is enough, what can we do?" he asked.

Secretary of States James Baker said Friday the United States would be willing to seek Security Council authorisation if that is the only way to get a U.N. police force to protect Kurdish refugees.

He said the United States was committed to relinquishing as soon as possible to international relief and humanitarian groups the protective role now played by American troops in northern Iraq.

"If the only way that is going to happen... is through the mechanism of another resolution by the U.N. Security Council, I think we should seek another resolution of the U.N. Security Council," he told reporters after talks with German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

Former Afghan king unveils peace plan

ROME (R) — The former king of Afghanistan has unveiled a detailed plan for replacing 12 years of civil war in his homeland with free elections and a parliamentary system.

"It is for the Afghans to freely decide on our country's future regime," exiled monarch Zahir Shah told Reuters at his villa in Rome, where he has lived since being deposed in a 1973 coup.

The plan drawn up by the 76-year-old former king, a symbol of legitimate authority for many Afghans, calls for setting up a committee of rebel Mujahideen commanders, politicians and other figures who live in Afghanistan and abroad.

The committee would call an emergency Afghan Jirga, or assembly of personalities, to create a temporary executive charged with making the peace and drafting a constitution.

Mujahideen guerrillas have been fighting the Kabul government since the Soviet Union sent troops in 1979 to prop up the government. Moscow withdrew troops a decade later.

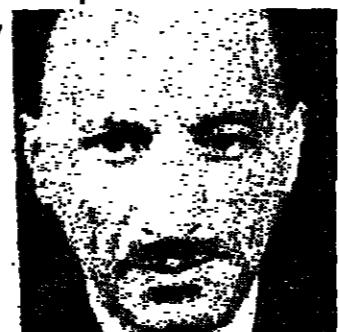
Under the plan, the executive would also prepare for holding under U.N. auspices a wider Loya Jirga, the traditional Afghan assembly of tribal notables, which would work towards free elections and a parliamentary system.

"I am convinced that, in line with the basic principles of Islam and our national traditions the majority of the people of Afghanistan will choose and support a democratic form of government," Zahir Shah said in a rare interview.

A source close to the former king said the plan had already been confidently presented and positively received by various parties and governments involved in Afghan affairs.

Diplomats say diminished U.S. and Soviet interest in fueling the war, Saudi Arabian disengagement with fundamentalist guerrillas who turned against them over the Gulf war and warming relations between Riyadh and Tehran, have combined to offer new options.

The king said he was ready to return to his country, even if it



Zahir Shah

means risking his life.

"As a patriot, I have put my person and my life at the service of my people. My personal safety has never been a concern to me and is the least of my worries."

"Returning to the homeland is however a strong urge shared by all Afghans. I have always put my trust in God and I shall return to my beloved country if the people of Afghanistan so decide," said Zahir Shah.

A keen walker, the former king lives with his wife in a spacious villa set in rolling fields on Rome's northern outskirts, his home guarded around the clock by paramilitary police.

The tall, white-haired Zahir Shah was deposed while on a visit to Rome to seek medical help for an eye complaint, from which he still suffers. Overall his health remains good.

Some fundamentalists fighting the government in Kabul, notably the powerful Hezbi Islam group, oppose Zahir Shah's return.

To them the king, who ruled for 40 years until his overthrow, represents the old feudal order which they want to replace with Islamic law.

Asked if he was worried by last month's capture of the eastern garrison town of Khost by guerrillas, a serious setback for president Najibullah, the king said the victory was mainly due to local fighters.

"Indeed they had learned from past experience the importance of improved coordination and cooperation between different groups... they now realised that unity of action at operational level and taking their own decision are the main factors of success."

Mashat says he retired to Canada

TORONTO (AP) — A former Iraqi ambassador to the United States, whose immigration to Canada has caused a furor, said he had doubts about Iraqi policies and decided to leave when the political situation got so bad.

But Mohammad Al Mashat, 60, said Friday he was not threatened and was just looking for a place to retire.

He also told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation he did not know anything about the "internal politics" surrounding the granting of permanent resident status March 27.

Immigration Minister Bernard Valcourt, meanwhile, announced Friday in Winnipeg that officials would work through the weekend to trace how the residency was granted without the knowledge of senior officials.

The department's findings will be made public Tuesday, he said.

Political opponents have criticised Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's government for the decision, saying an ambassador of Iraq should not have been accepted so easily.

Mr. Mashat, who was frequently seen on U.S. television defending Iraq's takeover of Kuwait in the days before the outbreak of war, was awarded resident status as a financially independent retiree.

In the interview on Friday, he was asked if the reason he'd decided not to return to Iraq when recalled by Baghdad in mid-January just before the war was that he was afraid.

"You know, I have for a long time been thinking about retirement. I am not a young man," he responded. "So when the situation got so hot, and when my country was in the process of destruction... I decided to end up my diplomatic career and start a new life with my family."

Asked if his life had been threatened, he said, "I haven't had any threat... I had some reservations on some of the policies... that's all."

He said he applied to Canada because he had visited the country and liked the weather and the people. His whereabouts during the interview were not disclosed.

The U.S. State Department says it played no role in helping the former ambassador gain admission to Canada.

As a landed immigrant, Mr. Mashat is eligible for Canadian citizenship after three years. He bought a home in the Vancouver area and said he might consider working as an academic.

"I will start a new life. I will read. I will write books maybe," Mr. Mashat told CBC from Vancouver.

He chose Canada because he had visited the country in 1988 and liked the people and climate of its west coast.

Canadian opposition party officials have said the ambassador received approval to enter Canada about five times faster than is the case for most foreigners seeking landed immigrant status.

Mr. Mashat said he offered no information to intelligence services in Canada or the United States in exchange for speedy entry into Canada.

Israel seeks closer ties with Jewish settlements

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli government has launched a drive to knit Jewish settlements in the occupied territories to Israel proper, Israel television reported.

The report was broadcast on Friday night only hours after Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh left Israel after a visit during which he played down differences over the settlements.

A television newsmen, introducing a story on Jewish settlement, said "great effort was underway to establish contiguity" between the settlements and the state of Israel, especially with the West Bank city of Hebron.

Mr. Bessmertnykh, the highest Soviet official to visit the Jewish state, angered Israeli leaders with comments he made in Jordan Thursday in which he refused to rule out restrictions on Soviet emigration to stop Israel building new settlements.

About 250,000 Soviet Jews have moved to Israel since 1989 when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev eased curbs on their movements.

In Israel, Mr. Bessmertnykh declined to comment on his earlier remarks and struck a conciliatory note. "We agreed that no country would try to put pressure on any country in the (peace) process," he said before leaving for Cairo.

About 100,000 Jews have settled among the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Left-wing parliamentarians say

plans are afoot to double the Jewish population in the occupied territories in the next few years and building work has started to expand the settlements.

Washington and Moscow, which both back land for peace as a basic for Middle East talks, view in settlements as obstacles to peace. Both also say Soviet immigrants should not go to the settlements.

Israel says it will not direct the

issue at the airport news conference, Mr. Bessmertnykh said.

"I can tell you that the question you raised is now being actively analysed. I think it will be resolved in such a way that our citizens leaving for Israel would not feel themselves discriminated, as compared with those leaving for other countries. So I think full fairness will be restored here."

Asked about the issue at the airport news conference, Mr. Bessmertnykh said:

"I can tell you that the question you raised is now being actively analysed. I think it will be resolved in such a way that our citizens leaving for Israel would not feel themselves discriminated, as compared with those leaving for other countries. So I think full fairness will be restored here."

Intense negotiations by Mr. Baker with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir failed to break the impasse over a role for the United Nations, which Israel

Husseini cuts short tour to meet Baker

LONDON (R) — Palestinian nationalist leader Faisal Al Husseini said Friday he was cutting short a European tour to return to occupied Jerusalem for a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker next Tuesday.

Mr. Husseini, who led a Palestinian delegation in previous talks with Mr. Baker, said he hoped Mr. Baker would have some answers after inconclusive negotiations last month with Israel.

"We want some answers from him about what happened in his last talks with the Israelis," Mr. Husseini said. "For our part, we want a full role for Europe and the United Nations."

He told a news conference in London he was returning "because I hope this meeting (with Mr. Baker) will give us a clear idea if this peace process is going forward in the face of obstacles."

Mr. Baker is trying to get Arabs and Israelis to agree to a peace conference co-sponsored by Washington and Moscow but he interrupted a Middle East tour last month when his mother died.

Mr. Husseini said he hoped that a ground-breaking visit to Israel by Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh would give impetus to the U.S. effort.

"We believe the Soviet Union has cards to play and we believe even the United States needs the role of the Soviet Union to pressure Israel to accept the start of the peace process," Mr. Husseini said.

Palestinian sources said they hoped Mr. Bessmertnykh would use Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union and the resumption of its levers to force concessions from Israel.

Mr. Husseini repeated the Palestinian demand that a peace conference should be "under the umbrella of international legitimacy," a reference to the United Nations.

He repeated his allegiance to the PLO which he called the Palestinians' only legitimate representative. Israel refuses to meet the PLO.

Ethiopian president names new cabinet, seeks to end civil war

ADDIS ABABA (AP) — President Mengistu Haile Mariam has appointed a 20-member cabinet and instructed them to seek an end to decades of civil war.

Prime Minister Tesfaye Dinku, who proposed the new cabinet, said Thursday its top priority would be to end the fighting that has enveloped almost a third of this Horn of Africa nation.

But Western diplomats, interviewed by telephone from Nairobi, said they saw little hope the cabinet changes would affect the course of the conflict.

"That depends on what happens at the peace talks in London later this month," one diplomat said.

Another diplomat thought the absence of hawks in the new cabinet might improve prospects for negotiations between the government and three rebel groups.

"But that depends on who the government sends to the negotiations," he said.

The envoys spoke on condition they not be identified further.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen is scheduled to mediate peace talks in London later this month between Ethiopia's government and the Tigrean, Eritrean and Oromo rebels.

Mr. Tesfaye, a moderate who previously served as foreign minister, was appointed by Col. Mengistu two weeks ago with instructions to form a new cabinet.

His selections included mainly moderate technocrats. The new cabinet has eight fresh faces, including deputy prime ministers.

Eight ministers in the previous cabinet retained their posts and

four were given new ones.

The previous cabinet had 26 members, including four deputy prime ministers.

The Tigre People's Liberation Front, which had sought Col. Mengistu's ouster since 1975, has seized two northwestern provinces and parts of three others.

Another insurgent group, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, has pushed down the Red Sea coast, threatening Assab, the only major port still in government hands.

The Eritreans have been fighting a 30-year war for the independence of their northernmost province of Eritrea, which they largely control.

The Oromo Liberation Front, a small group, operates mainly across southern Ethiopia, but the major insurrections have insisted on its inclusion in the peace talks.

Sudan says rebels downed relief plane

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudanese rebels shot down a light plane carrying emergency supplies and banknotes to a town in southern Sudan, state-run Radio Omdurman

Home News

Committee to determine cause of crop destruction in Jordan Valley

AMMAN (J.T.) — A committee set up by Prime Minister Mudar Badran to examine the question of damage sustained by crops in the central Jordan Valley region, in all its aspects, is due to convene Sunday under the chairmanship of Dr. Abdul Aziz Wishah, Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) secretary general.

The committee, which groups representatives of the ministries of water and irrigation, agriculture and health as well as the University of Jordan and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), is expected to discuss the issue in all its aspects and focus attention on

the water allegedly polluted, the soil and the weather conditions in order to determine the cause of the damage to the crops, estimated at JD 60 million.

Farmers have threatened to sue the government for the damage to their crops and Friday staged a protest march against three government ministers and parliamentarians who failed to attend a meeting to discuss the question as had been planned.

The committee chairman, Dr. Wishah, said that he had toured the affected regions and found that serious damage was inflicted on peaches, grapes and tomatoes

and lesser degree damage to other crops.

Experts called to give their opinion on the situation expressed conflicting interpretations of this phenomenon, with some of them attributing the damage to pests, others blaming the soil and others insisting that it was the quality of water used, Dr. Wishah said.

He said that it was this conflict of views that prompted the prime minister to set up an ad hoc committee to study the issue and to report to the government on its findings.

Bakery workers warned to obtain valid work permits by Thursday

ZARQA (J.T.) — Workers employed by bakeries in Jordan have until this coming Thursday to settle their dues, in the form of fees for work permits required for every non-Jordanian worker to get employment in the Kingdom, according to Labour Minister Abdul Karim Al Dugham.

"The Ministry of Labour is serious about ordering workers not complying with the Jordanian laws to leave the country if by the deadline they fail to have acquired the permits," the minister said at a meeting held at the governor's office here.

Owners of bakeries in Jordan have been dodging payment of the JD 100 required from each non-Jordanian in their employment, and the non-Jordanian workers also refuse to pay.

The Ministry of Labour believes that nearly 5,000 foreign workers are currently employed in Jordan's 700 registered bakeries.

Out of 160,000 non-Jordanians employed in the country only 23 per cent work illegally, according to a recent statistical bulletin issued by the Ministry of Labour.

Those employed illegally in Jordan owe millions of dinars in arrears to the Jordanian government.

The minister said the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) was opening new courses and centres to train job-seekers in various trades, including bakery work and truck driving. "From now on the Ministry of Labour will not issue work permits for the non-Jordanian truckers because this occupation can easily be filled by the Jordanian drivers," the minister said.

At the outset of the meeting, the minister was briefed by Zarqa Governor Mohammad Al Shabani on the labour market in the Zarqa region.

Mr. Dugham said at the meeting, Zarqa that owners of bakeries and other employers of non-Jordanian workers should cooperate with the Ministry of Labour in order to help the job-seekers.

Referring to the bakeries, Mr. Dugham said his ministry had nothing to do with the bread prices. He said the Ministry of Supply only could change the bread prices and the issue had no

relation with the non-Jordanians abiding by the law of the country.

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Mr. Dugham later opened an annual exhibition displaying products of the Vocational Training Centres in the Zarqa region. These included wood work, decor, central heating, sanitation equipment, electric appliances, equipment for auto mechanics, electricity, building.

The exhibition also displays products of 30 different companies and workshops in the governorate.

becomes international 50 per cent of the profits will go to the needy children of the world.

"I am grateful for many things that God has bestowed upon me and by inventing something to benefit the needy I feel I can show some appreciation to God."

The sample multiloops have all been hand-made in Jordan. Their cost is slightly higher than that of envelope sold in Jordan, or they cost about 30 fils each. Even without mechanising the process of making the multiloops, their cost remains lower than that of envelopes of the same size sold in Europe, Mr. Malhas said.

"I hope that we can mechanise the making of the multiloop here in Jordan," Mr. Malhas said.

Mr. Malhas received the gold medal, the prize of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) which is given to the best inventor from a developing country. The gold plated medal is given for the best inventions of the invention.

The president of the Council of State of the republic and canton of Geneva, Bernard Ziegler said that the multiloop is an invention that touches every one, every day (Post offices in Geneva alone handled 1 million envelopes daily), and he considered the multiloop the most important invention he saw out of the 600 participating in the exhibition.

"To this day the multiloop remains unregistered in my own country," Mr. Malhas said. "There have been no channels in their matter so far, and the controversy remains unresolved," he added.

the Swiss, French and German television stations, two radio stations and six newspapers and magazines covered the event and highlighted the multiloop idea that was invented by a Jordanian."

"Many people started to know more about Jordan because in the section where I displayed my invention I put up large posters of the different touristic areas in Jordan," Mr. Malhas said, adding that he regretted not getting much appreciation for the multiloop in the country that means the most to him, Jordan his homeland.

A great deal of controversy surrounds the multiloop and whether it is considered an invention remains to the seen.

According to Mr. Malhas, the officer in charge of registering patents for inventions at the Ministry of Trade and Industry did not consider the multiloop an invention because it did not meet "the criteria to be considered one and refused to register it as such."

Mr. Abdullah Toukan at the Higher Council for Science and Technology said that the multiloop is an invention that touches every one, every day (Post offices in Geneva alone handled 1 million envelopes daily), and he considered the multiloop the most important invention he saw out of the 600 participating in the exhibition.

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Arab Cooperation Council will rise again, chief says

By Rama Sabagh
Reuter

AMMAN — The head of the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) predicted on Saturday the moribund group would rise from the ashes of the Gulf war.

"Legally speaking, the ACC still exists," Secretary General Hilmu Nammar, an Egyptian, told Reuters in an interview.

But Arab political sources ruled out a quick recovery for the fledgling common market grouping Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Yemen, that was one of the first casualties of the Gulf crisis.

"The bloc's revival depends on what will happen in Iraq," one of the sources said. "Frankly, I cannot see President Mubarak sitting at the same table with President Hussein and therefore the bloc will remain paralysed and could eventually die."

Mr. Nammar said: "Certainly the Gulf crisis has frozen activities until matters return to normal

among the members. "But I do not believe there is any conviction in any of the four countries to withdraw from the council," he added.

The ACC was formed in February 1989, aspiring to become an economic grouping serving 80 million people. Politically, the four members never had much in common and they gained few practical benefits from 29 cooperation agreements.

"We were about to start acting to implement these accords, but the conditions which the member countries underwent did not allow us to take any measures," said Mr. Nammar.

Sitting under portrait of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, King Hussein and Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Mr. Nammar said he and his 22 employees had done little work since the Gulf crisis erupted but they were still drawing their full

salaries.

ACC officials say lay-offs might be necessary if the four member states do not replenish the group's coffers by the end of the year.

The political sources say each of the four countries, for one reason or another, would like to see the group revived.

"Iraq will use it as a gate through which it will gradually be readmitted into the Arab fold," one said.

"Jordan has always believed in Arab solidarity and the bloc will continue to give it a strong cushion to lean on and face any future Arab-Israeli developments," he added.

"The group could also become a nucleus for a future Arab bloc with Syria, Lebanon, any entity on the Israeli-held West Bank, Sudan and the five-nation Arab Maghreb Union — Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Mauritania."

Mr. Fariz said that his ministry trusted that the industrialists and owners of the factories, especially those located along the Zarqa River, would abide by regulations which, among other things, require the installation of special equipment for the treatment of waste water so that it would not pollute the water flowing into the King Talal Dam.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the minister said that the factories had been informed of the required specifications and the instructions to follow to ensure that the water remained unpolluted. They were also required to refrain from dumping waste into the river.

The law is being enforced at

the moment because of the severe damage the polluted water had caused to the agricultural produce, he noted. "In the past years, the water did not cause so much ecological damage nor was the water so polluted because many factories had abided by the law," said the minister. Only 38 factories, 12 of which are located within the Zarqa River basin, have not yet abided by the regulations, the minister noted.

The Council of Ministers last week set up a four-member ministerial committee, chaired by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Mohammad Al Zaben, to conduct a wide-scale study designed to find suitable sites for dumping refuse and to deal with the quality of water in the Zarqa River.

The creation of the committee came close on the heels of a statement by Minister of Water and Irrigation Saad Hayel Serour who announced that the water of the King Talal Dam was polluted by boron and chemical substances and warned that the contamina-

tion could reach unprecedented levels this summer.

The minister blamed the situation on the factories and plants along the Zarqa River, which, he said, feeds the reservoir behind the King Talal Dam.

OIC meeting debated reports

AMMAN (Petra) — Secretary General of the Ministry of Planning Dr. Saifan Toukan returned home from Istanbul, Turkey, after leading Jordan's delegation at the meeting of the follow-up committee of the Organisation of Islamic Conference's (OIC) economic and commercial cooperation permanent committee convened there on May 7.

Dr. Toukan said the committee

had discussed several reports, one prepared by the OIC General Secretariat, on the achievements of the OIC and its role in enhancing economic cooperation among member states.

Dr. Toukan added that the committee had discussed another report by the general secretariat dealing with the OIC member states' preferential treatment system.

Jordan, Libya discuss cooperation in education

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Higher Education Saeed Al Tal received Saturday a delegation representing a popular Libyan delegation currently visiting Jordan and discussed with its members scopes of cooperation between Jordanian and Libyans universities.

Dr. Tal welcomed Libya's moves aimed at consolidating joint Arab action and stressed Jordan's keenness to enhance cooperation with Arab states for the best of the Arab peoples.

The members of the visiting delegation briefed Dr. Tal on the nature of their mission in Jordan and voiced their support for official and public Jordanian moves attempting to support Arab solidarity.

They emphasised that Libya was doing all it could to support

Arab solidarity and pointed out that the Libyan government had recently opened its borders with Egypt and removed obstacles impeding the transit of goods and travel of passengers.

According to the delegation members, the Libyan government has issued a decision allowing the import of Jordanian industrial and agricultural products by Libyan markets, without any administrative measures, in a bid to support the Jordanian economy. The Jordanian products will be completely exempt from all tariffs and taxes.

The delegation also visited the Islamic Da'wa College, of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and were received by Dean of the College Dr. Rajeh Al Kurdi, who briefed them on the various departments and its educational system.

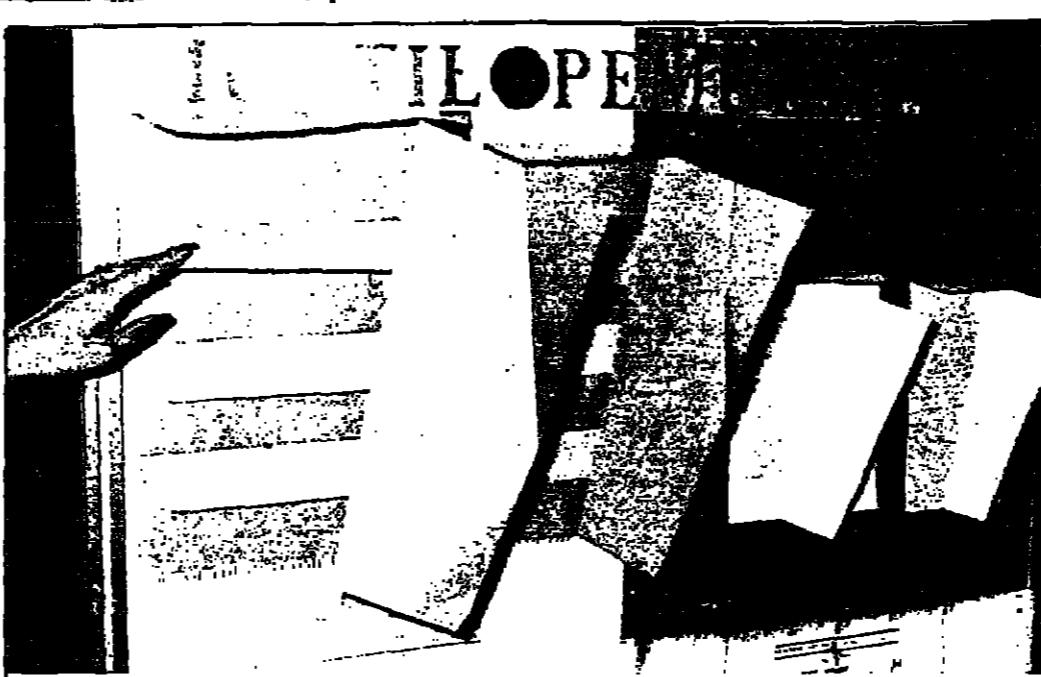
CSCC team goes shopping

AMMAN (Petra) — A two-member team from the Civil Service Consumer Corporation (CSCC) left Amman Saturday for visits to Italy, Poland and Tunisia, expected to last ten days.

The team, led by Radi Ibrahim, secretary general of the Ministry of Supply, will hold talks with businesses in these countries to secure commodities needed by the CSCC.

Mr. Abdulla, the CSCC director, said last month that plans were drawn up to keep the CSCC branches in Jordan stocked with sufficient goods in demand by the public so that the beneficiaries would not be forced to pay extra prices elsewhere.

Government employees and their families benefit from the CSCC branches which now total 23.



The multiloop, a Jordanian innovation that wins two medals at the International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva

Jordanian honoured for innovation at Geneva fair

By Maha Addasi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Jordanian architect has invented reusable envelopes or multiloops, as he calls them, for which he won the gold medal and the gold plated medal at the 19th international exhibition of Inventions in Geneva making him the only inventor among the 600 participating to win two prizes at the event held last April.

Abdel Elah Malhas, a graduate of the American University of Beirut (AUB) is the first Jordanian to ever participate in the exhibition held annually in Geneva. He invented an envelope that is designed to be

reused and can be used for various purposes. The envelope is made of a special material that allows it to be folded and unfolded easily. It is also made of a special material that allows it to be folded and unfolded easily.

The original envelope has three lines on it, each indicating a partition. When a person sends the letter he or she writes the address above the first line. The recipient gets the letter, cuts above that line, thus removing the stamp and address and the envelope is as good as new, only slightly smaller.

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News below headlines

THE MINISTRY of Education is making headlines these days. Naturally it is attracting attention of the public as well as the press. The news below the headlines, however, did not start with the recent massive reshuffle of personnel at the ministry or with the new guidelines and rules on parental attendance of their children's school social activities. The problem of education is indeed bigger and broader than the latest developments, important as they may be. The real issues of education go back to several years and touch upon the core of educational policy in the country. In fact they can be traced back to the perennial lack of a coherent and steady course that has enjoyed support across the spectrum of the Jordanian society.

It is unfortunate that our educational policy — or rather policies — have fluctuated from year to year on bases that appear to have also changed from one minister to another. In the process, the country has been deprived of an evolutionary policy that is free of arbitrary fluctuations unrelated to the overall objectives of an enlightened, moral and progressive elementary and secondary education. There is a pressing need, therefore, to save our schools and pupils from the whims and prejudices of any person or group of persons who may not enjoy the overwhelming support of parents and children alike.

Against the backdrop of recent fumbling in educational policy and practices, such an overriding objective has become a high priority issue that awaits urgent rectification. One way to address this crisis is to re-energise the existing National Board of Education by entrusting it with an expanded mandate to include the review of our educational line and draw a blueprint for its restructuring. As things stand now, the 18-member board confines its deliberations to subjects that do not really matter. In the same vein, the two houses of Parliament would also be invited to enhance the mandate of their existing education committee in order to facilitate a more thorough debate of the core issues affecting their work. Moreover the board and the parliament committees need to be more broadly constituted so that they reflect more faithfully the wide spectrum of opinion in the country. Through this, and other positive steps, a genuine national process of educational development can be started. Otherwise, education policy in Jordan would remain a victim of whimsical decisions and lobbying of various political groups.

Jordan prides itself in the fact that it is a centrist country that enjoys international support for its moderation and reasonableness. This status and image of the Kingdom stands to sustain considerable damage if extremist ideas are allowed to take root. Our educators should address more fundamental problems and challenges confronting the students population instead of making an issue of subjects that are of marginal relevance to true and healthy education. With unemployment rampant in the country and more than half of Jordanians are in the student bracket, the Ministry of Education is better off devising and working on remedies and solutions than it is banning fathers from watching their daughters compete in school sports. Even more vital is to articulate a policy that aims at preparing our future generations to be good and productive citizens rather than condition them to attain ephemeral political gains.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

The Middle East question is a direct result of Israel's aggression on the Arab Nation and its occupation of Palestinian land for which numerous U.N. Security Council resolutions have been passed in order to achieve peace, said Al Ra'i daily Saturday. The Israeli aggression is the oldest issue in the files of the United Nations and still it is not solved despite the resolutions and the realisation of the world community of the grave injustice that had befallen the Palestinian people, the paper added. For their part, the Arab countries have been calling for a peaceful settlement, and the exchange of land for peace to no avail, the paper noted. All Arab countries — those which backed the U.S.-led alliance against Iraq and those which remained neutral — have supported the U.N. Security Council resolutions that ordered Iraq to pull out its forces from Kuwait, and they did that out of a belief that all Security Council resolutions should be respected by all nations, the paper noted. It said that it is the right of all these Arab states to demand that U.N. resolutions on the Middle East question and the Palestine problem be implemented and it is the right of the Arabs to be awarded with the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 and 338 and not punished by the alliance. The paper said the western countries would be displaying their betrayal not only of their allies, but also the very principles of the United Nations, if the present state of affairs persists, and if the Zionists are allowed to maintain their aggression on Arab land.

The initial outcome of a tour by Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh of the region point to the fact that Israel is the only intransigent party in the Middle East conflict and it is Israel which continues to place obstacles in the path of a settlement to the Palestine problem, said Al Dustour daily Saturday. One can see that the Soviet minister's talks in Damascus and Annan had centered on the need to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions so that peace can be achieved; but Israel shifted the talks towards its own interests, said the paper. The Israelis discussed the restoration of Soviet relations and avoided any mention of the pressing questions which include the Jewish settlements, nor did they refer to the prospect of an Israeli pull-out, the paper noted. In the Arab side, said the paper, the Soviet minister heard a candid talk about peace based on the international legitimacy, and Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab land. Indeed, Moscow's involvement in the peace making process side by side with the United States is very important specially as the US secretary of state is making ready for yet another tour of the region, the paper added. It said if Washington and Moscow join hands in seeking a settlement, hopes will rise in the hearts of the people of the world that the world community is after all, determined to see justice and peace established in this region.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

What to do before the dust settles

IN the third month after the end of the Gulf war, it is evident that the dust has not settled yet, and may not settle for many months to come. After finishing with the announced and agreed agenda, time has come for the hidden agendas.

Turkey would like to use the Kurds to seize the oil rich north of Iraq as its prize for cooperating with America in defeating Iraq.

Iraq would like to install a puppet Shi'ite government in the southern part of Iraq, and put the holy places under its control, as its prize for being neutral in the war against Iraq.

Britain would like to recover at least part of its colonial privileges in Kuwait and elsewhere in the oil rich Gulf sheikdoms as its prize for active participation in the war against Iraq.

Israel would like to cash-in for keeping its mouth shut while the coalition was fighting its war against Iraq, to enjoy its military superiority by going public with its intention to annex the West Bank, to accomplish its still hidden agenda of destroying Syria, at least out of caution against possible changes.

The United States won the war but has no plan for peace in the face of an persistent Israeli defiance. It is not sure what to do with its unchallenged power in the area, and whether its interests will be better served by a fragmented and unstable Iraq.

Egypt is keeping silent, as if it has no responsibility for what is taking place in Iraq, at least after its withdrawal from Kuwait and acceptance of all the thirteen resolutions taken by the international Security Council.

Kuwait is hardly an independent state. All important decisions regarding the present and the future difficulties are left to the United States.

Iraq was devastated beyond imagination. The only hands extended are full of knives and explosives. Iran and Turkey are hoping to help themselves into Iraqi territories, while America is blockading Iraq and preventing its central government from acting swiftly to safeguard its territorial integrity.

The PLO is struggling for survival. It lost international and Arab political and financial support. Its only stock in trade is the continued approval of its own people who can do little under the occupation of Israel and much less under suppression of Gulf states.

Jordan is rather depressed and bewildered. It does not like what is going on. Although Jordan formally rejected the annexation of Kuwait, it adhered to the U.N. resolutions and sanctions. Yet Jordan is blamed for not joining the American-led coalition. The Jordanian people are blamed for speaking out and acting as an Arab people, when another Arab people was subjected to destruction. Jordan has nothing to apologise for, yet it does not want to be isolated by-passed politically, or punished financially and economically, or criticised in the Americanised media apparatus.

How things will finally settle is everybody's guess. The only sure thing is that the Middle East, or the Arab World, will never be the same again. A new Arab order or disorder is in the making.

When emotions calm down and history is written, Jordan will get high marks for its honest stance against war and foreign intervention, and for choosing principles over interest. Jordan will then be praised for its democracy, free economy, denouncing terrorism and promoting peace and stability. But until historians

take over,

foreign and Arab politicians will have inflicted lots of damage. Therefore, Jordan must act, and the following steps should be considered.

— Consolidation of democracy and pluralism through early approval of the National Charter and issuance of a new liberal law for political parties and parliamentary elections.

— Closer relations with Europe and Japan, being the only possible sources of political and financial support, while Gulf states take a negative attitude.

— More political visibility in the Arab and international arenas.

When some governments block our way, we should extend our channels directly to the people. We should be the advocates of democracy in the Arab World, and of peace and stability in the international circles.

— Jordan should become more active in Palestinian question. With at least 40 per cent of its population being of Palestinian origin, and being the only place that Palestinians in the Gulf states look for as a protector and refuge of last resort, and with its land as a target for the Israeli plan of transfer, Jordan cannot keep a low profile and watch developments, simply to avoid accusations of undermining the status of PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

— We should make up our mind on whether a new cabinet and a new parliament are needed for the coming stage, or whether the current two branches of government can carry on and lead Jordan through the explosive minefield to the safe shore.

In general, Jordan should not just sit down to wait and see. It should move to the offensive, be more dynamic, and take calculated risks.

242 demands more than Sinai

By Shimon Shetreet

AFTER the Gulf war and the visit by Secretary of State Baker, energetic discussions began on the political level on methods of solving the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Camp David and Resolutions 242 and 338.

The Likud government and its spokesmen have, in recent weeks, girded themselves to present their stand on the future of territories. One of the main spokesmen to the Likud, who articulates his positions both in Israel and abroad in articles and interviews, is MK Binyamin (Benny) Begin.

A central argument voiced by Begin, relying on Prof. Eugene Rostow, a prominent legal personality in the U.S., is that Israel, by evacuating Sinai, has already carried out the principle contained in Resolution 242 concerning withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories conquered by it in the six day war. Therefore there is no justification for demanding additional territorial concessions from Israel to implement

Resolution 242.

From the Likud's viewpoint, this claim has a certain attraction, since it garbs in apparently solid legal raiment the basic political thesis seemingly at the root of Menachem Begin's conception by which he would sacrifice all Sinai and in return could retain control of the West Bank and Gaza, and perhaps also the Golan Heights.

If this argument represents simply the "first line of defence," which a wise and astute advocate puts forward to afford himself the possibility of retreating to a second line of defence, then I have no problem with Begin. It is, after all, in the nature of the conflict to present certain arguments with the intention of trying to persuade by the use of alternative arguments, even if they are not all strong and convincing.

However, if Begin truly and sincerely believes this to be the meaning of Resolution 242, and that his position is a final stand amounting to a *sine qua non*, then it is doubtful whether it will stand the test of bilateral or multilateral negotiations conducted between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states.

It is now being said that the principle of withdrawal from territories embodied in 242 relates to a withdrawal whose scope was not determined (according to the interpretation accepted by Israel) in all sectors.

Therefore, it would be better

for Likud spokesmen and Begin to recheck their argument thoroughly and not base their claims too firmly on an approach that will have difficulty gaining support in international public opinion and among neutral observers of the conflict — not to mention the potential partners in negotiations, namely the Arab states and Palestinians.

Even according to the alternative interpretation, it is still possible to posit a withdrawal from territories which would leave defensible borders and ensure the security interests of the state of Israel.

That has been the line followed by every government of Israel. This is also my personal position. For this goal, however, there is need to base oneself on a hard, rigorous interpretation claiming that withdrawal from a single sector, Sinai, already represents the full realisation of the principle of withdrawal from territories.

The writer, a Labour member of Israeli Knesset, is a professor of law. The article is reprinted from the *Jerusalem Post*.

A Malay view: Muslims miss the real issues

By Michael Richardson

KUALA LUMPUR — In an unusually outspoken criticism from within the Islamic community, Anwar Ibrahim, the Malaysian finance minister, has said that many Muslims around the world are marginalised, self-deluded and living with the outmoded bogeymen of the West and the United States.

"Instead of talking about hunger and poverty, there are Muslim countries talking about the application of Sharia law when people are dying of hunger," Mr. Anwar said in an interview with the International Herald Tribune. Sharia is the legal code of Islam. "This is not Islam," he added. "This is just one way of escapism so that people don't talk about social and economic issues, hunger, poverty, corruption or mismanagement. Or the fact that billions of dollars are spent on arms and military equipment."

He said Muslims and Muslim nations could no longer afford to be misled by extremism if they wanted to improve living conditions, modernise and compete on an equal footing with the West.

Mr. Anwar, a 43-year-old Malay Muslim who many political analysts see as a future prime minister, said Muslim, as well as Western, countries had ignored "all the excesses you can think of" in Iraq for many years because "they thought that Saddam was the saviour of the Arabs when he fought the Iranians".

He said that the sooner Saddam Hussein was removed from power by the Iraqi people the better. "But knowing a system that is authoritarian, dictatorial and run by military and paramilitary outfits, I feel helpless to say how," he said.

In an interview, Mr. Anwar added that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait should teach Muslims a lesson.

"We have got to stop playing up the bogey of imperialism or the West or America, and address real central issues confronting Muslim societies," he said.

Those issues, he said, included better education for women as well as men, equality of the sexes, the gap between rich and poor, employment opportunities for women, lack of basic freedom and tolerance, and disregard for human rights.

Mr. Anwar, who represents the moderate face of Islam that has played a key role in the successful economic development of Malaysia and Indonesia, told an international conference of Islamic scholars and intellectuals that ended May 5 that he deplored the "hypocrisy, greed and oppression among Muslim countries."

He said that if the more than 40 Muslim nations had opposed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, "probably the tragic consequences could have been averted."

Mr. Anwar said a sectarian impulse in the Muslim community had "created innumerable pockets of false loyalties."

He added, "Our narrow interpretation of Islam has resulted in our seclusion from the rest of the world."

Muslims, he said, are marginalised, adding that unless they accept the reality of a pluralistic

A new international order?

Francisco Rezek

The writer is the minister of foreign affairs of Brazil. The article is reprinted from the Belgrade-based *Review of International Affairs*.

THE TIMES we live in are marked by deep transformations bringing existential changes to many. The key question is: will we be a pale replica of history or, on the contrary, capable of affirming the much-needed modern tendencies and taking advantage of the prospects opening up before us and creating a world of greater prosperity and solidarity and, in that world, a better Brazil.

The Greco-Roman heritage has enriched western civilization. In a retrospective vision, the accumulated achievements are a matter of pride, while at the same time the collective memory is shrouded in black. The extraordinary progress of human thought, art and science did not suffice to prevent the stockpiling of an arsenal that fed confrontation, attempts to impose hegemony and disagreements among people and nations.

The Renaissance that inaugurated the modern epoch by placing man and his ideas of the human community in the forefront; the enlightening dream of republican ideas that had so great an influence on America's independence, on France's revolution, on our appeal from Isparta; the Romantic nationalism that produced Italian and German unification; the modernising impulses of the industrial revolution that changed thoroughly the course of modern history — all of this together brought about the present outstanding advancement of technology while simultaneously increasing the differences between rich and poor.

These have further been exacerbated by the extreme politicisation of international relations as the consequence of two world wars and the bipolar structure of world power, ideological and Pharisee-like at the political level

and discriminatory and protectionist in the economic sphere. The interests of states and the desire for individual leadership have set the course of history. It is no wonder that Heidegger, causing considerable surprise, re-gretted the "forgetting of man" as a factor and the primary objective of human evolution.

Today, at the close of an epoch that knew how to build and how to destroy, we, again, see the rehabilitating winds of our hopes. But we have already learned that progress is not forged in the inertia of historical events. Evolution calls for a majority political will to bring man back to the centre of historical happenings; it calls for a joint effort to surmount the most vital collective problems while producing a new ethnic and transforming the community of nations into a centre of solidarity and quality control of our own actions.

Many of the prospects now opening before us for peace and understanding among nations can be summed up in the cessation of the Cold War, in the disappearance of the Berlin Wall and the wave of democratisation spreading across Latin America and liberating Eastern Europe. This is the achievement of a generation that set itself the goal of improving the life style of a world threatened many times over by universal devastation.

We cannot boast that the improvement in relations between the goods and capital we possess, the unimaginable advancement of science and technology, the shortening of geographic distances and the cultural ties among countries offer proof of new times and new positive attainments at the service of the whole world. The dynamic centre of this post-industrial revolution seems not to want it to be spread around the world as though the attainments of the human mind need never be the heritage of us all.

The horizons opening before the human race are the product of changes that have led to disarmament and cessation of ideological confrontations, to the multiplicity

Conflicts which have for decades caused fear on the political scene and to universality in international relations. In today's democracy, we need to affirm the interests of minorities and freely-expressed legitimate confirmation of real national sovereignty and the political will of citizens.

Civil society, in its everyday manifestations on the streets of our cities, at universities, in parliaments, in courts and in the press, was the first to rebel against the dangers of a nuclear holocaust and the remnants of the arms race. It did so in an attempt to affirm human rights, raise its voice against the denial of freedoms, protest against social injustices, revolt against the destruction of the human environment, protest against ideological Pharisee-ism and the forgetting of man.

At international level, the modern revolution will be consummated when the majority interest transends the interests of states and blocs. On this plane, the multipolarity of decision-making centres in contrast to the bipolar structure of power, and deliverance from regional conflicts, reflect the termination of confrontation between East and West. On the other hand, the growing universality of economy intimates that international security will either be collective or it will not be at all. By the same token, economic liberalism will be confirmed as a general practice, without discrimination and protectionism, or, if not, it will become an ordinary mask to conceal retention of the old ways in the differences between North and South.

The end of the Cold War discourages confrontation on geopolitical and geostrategic grounds and we pass from ideological confrontation to political dialogue stimulating international interaction. Today it is possible to imagine the world now having to replace East-West confrontation with a confrontation between prosperity and economic backwardness-struggle between efficiency and

Kurdish autonomy pact expected

(Continued from page 1)

Iraqis should reconsider their apparent rejection of the U.N. police force idea," Mr. Boucher told reporters.

Mr. Boucher said the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Thomas Pickering, met Iraqi delegate Abdul Amir Al Anbari Friday in New York and explained "the importance of Iraq's cooperation with the United Nations in this effort."

"As Security Council resolutions have made clear, the international community will be watching Iraq's policies and practices and will judge Iraq accordingly" in determining when to lift crippling sanctions, Mr. Boucher added.

He said specific decisions on what to do next would depend on talks between Iraqi officials and U.N. envoys in the next few days.

Told the only alternative to a U.N. police force appears to be an extended U.S. presence in Iraq, Mr. Boucher replied:

"I wouldn't necessarily agree with that ... what happens next depends on a lot of these discussions that are going on, and also on the needs of the refugees."

Bessmertnykh optimistic

(Continued from page 1)

have moved to Israel since 1989, when the Soviet Union eased restrictions on emigration.

Mr. Bessmertnykh defended Moscow's policy of allowing Jews to emigrate, saying it was a natural internal development.

"This is the product of our democratization. And it is not directed only to one area but open to all areas," he said.

Moscow, he said, had a special interest in Middle East peace because it was concerned about Soviet Jews settling in Israel.

Mr. Bessmertnykh also said Moscow, which has rejected Israeli demands to renew ties as a precondition for acting as co-sponsor of a conference, was moving towards restoring ties with the Jewish state. He gave no date.

"We are approaching that moment. But that moment is still in the future," he said.

On Palestinian representation, he repeated the Soviet position that it was up to the Palestinians themselves to decide who should represent them.

GCC to join talks with Israel

(Continued from page 1)

observer, represented by the GCC secretary-general," he told reporters.

Mr. Baker said actual peace talks with Israel would be limited to the front-line Arab states, such as Jordan and Syria. He called the notion alone of Arabs and Israelis negotiating a breakthrough.

As to the GCC states negotiating subsidiary matters such as arms control, environmental matters and water resources, Mr. Khater said, the GCC members "would have no objection to attending and discussing such issues."

He spoke after a meeting of the European Community (EC) and GCC foreign ministers. In a communique, the two sides said of Mr. Baker's drive for peace,

"They fully support this initiative and the process envisaged which should enable negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours and between Israel and the Palestinians."

Until Saturday, Saudi Arabia had said it would not attend any peace conference.

The turnaround was interpreted as a major boost for Mr. Baker's latest mission, seen by many as his last in this series of attempts.

Israeli welcome

Israeli officials cautiously welcomed reports that the GCC states would abandon their four-decade long boycott of the Jewish state to sit at a Middle East peace table.

"It is certainly good news, and we are glad," said Yossi Olmert, director of the government press office.

But Mr. Olmert, reached by telephone, said Israel awaited confirmation of the report from Gulf countries before official statements would be issued.

Olmert responded to Mr. Baker's remarks in Shannon, Ireland, that the GCC states had agreed to break a "major taboo" and negotiate with Israel at a peace conference.

A senior Israeli official confirmed that the idea of the Saudis joining a second stage of talks on regional issues, "was always in the air," during Mr. Baker's talks in Israel.

The EC and the GCC also pledged to quickly conclude a free trade agreement, a goal that has eluded them in six years of negotiations. The issue gained in political significance for the EC as it seeks to increase its profile in the Middle East in the wake of the Gulf war.

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos, whose country currently holds the EC presidency, restated the EC view here a free trade accord with the GCC would be part of its contribution to bring peace and stability to the Middle East after the Gulf war.

The EC seeks a role in a Middle East peace conference. Parallel to that, it wants to help Middle East states economically.

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Bangladesh storm survivors say nothing can rebuild their lives

By Anis Ahmed
Reuters

MAHESHKHALI, Bangladesh — Hundreds of survivors of Bangladesh's worst cyclone huddle in flickering lamplight by the ruins of their homes on Maheshkhali island, listening to barking dogs feeding on bloated corpses nearby.

"I am just one of the living dead, please leave me alone," said Islam Matbar Hoarsley, his eyes red from lack of sleep since the cyclone struck on April 29, killing more than 125,000 Bangladeshis.

"Why us, oh Allah?" he asked. The cyclone hit as Matbar, the island's richest man, was holding a wedding feast for his son. Of about 100 people at the feast only he, the bride and the groom escaped death.

"I have been left to mourn for the rest of my life," Matbar said, squatting out of the wind and rain under the corrugated roof of his flattened home.

He was one of several hundred people sitting by wrecks of homes telling of their ordeals.

The storm killed at least 15,000 people in Maheshkhali, a rich fishing island 12 miles from the mainland resort of Cox's Bazar.

"They must be having a feast on the corpses," said one islander, shivering from the cold and pointing at the pack of barking dogs on the shore. "It is like hell."

"I suppose no help is enough to rebuild our shattered lives, no sympathy is enough to make up our losses," Matbar muttered as winds from the Bay of Bengal lifted his flowing beard.

In the Maheshkhali channel between Cox's Bazar and the island, vultures and crows pecked at floating bodies.

"Four of the seven teachers in my school have died," said an island headmaster.

Half of those who survived the storm have left their homes to join a fast-growing army of beggars crowding Chittagong port and other cities across the country.

"I cannot join them. My heart bleeds if I think of such a prospect," said 50-year-old Matbar.

Government officials in the capital Dhaka say the death toll from the cyclone has reached more than 125,000. Others in the affected areas say the final toll could be a quarter of a million.

The EC's status at a conference in Brussels between the EC foreign ministers and David Levy, their Israeli counterpart.

Israel wants the Europeans to have an observer role at best in a peace conference.

The EC and the GCC said Saturday any Middle East peace must be based on U.N. resolutions urging Israel to return land taken during the 1967 war in exchange for peace and recognition from its Arab neighbours.

Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek said the EC told the GCC Israel and its neighbours must take "confidence building measures" to guarantee the success of a peace conference.

Israel, he said, must end its settlements in the occupied territories and its Arab neighbours must end a boycott of Western companies doing business with the Jewish state. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal "made clear the Arab World had been forthcoming but the same could not be said of Israel," said Mr. Van den Broek.

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"Around 30,000 people have died in the Cox's Bazar district alone," said Abdullah Al Noman, minister of state for fisheries, livestock and environment.

The district administrator of Chittagong, Abdur Rab Khan, said nearly 80,000 people had been killed in his district alone and more reports of casualties were coming in.

More than 10,000 others were confirmed dead in coastal districts of Noakhali, Bhola, Patuakhali and on nearly a dozen offshore islands which were swept by 20-foot tidal waves whipped up by the 145 miles per hour storm.

The Maheshkhali islanders said relief supplies had started arriving in "good volume" but that distribution had not been streamlined.

Lack of coordination between government and private agencies meant some victims were being given supplies twice a day while others received nothing, they said.

Relief worker Shahabuddin Ahmed said the agencies were trying to overcome the problem.

The stench of rotting bodies sickens new arrivals to the area. "But we are here," said Shamsul Islam, a doctor with a relief team.

He said food, water and medical supplies arriving now would probably save most of the survivors in the "immediate aftermath of the disaster."

"The real crisis will begin when

Financial Markets		NEW YORK	
Jordan Times		in co-operation with	
Cairo Amman Bank			
U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	CLOSE Date 9/5/91	CLOSE Date 10/5/91	
Sterling Pound*	1.7190	1.7245	
Deutsche Mark	1.7305	1.7225	
Swiss Franc	1.4620	1.4545	
French Franc	5.8550	5.8225	
Japanese Yen	138.05	138.65	
European Currency Unit	1.1835	1.1954	
* USD Per STG.			

Eurocurrency Interest Rates				
Date: 10/5/91				
Currency	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	12 Month
U.S. Dollar	5.81	5.93	6.06	6.50
Sterling Pound	11.87	11.37	11.12	10.93
Deutsche Mark	8.75	8.93	9.12	9.18
Swiss Franc	8.25	8.12	8.25	7.93
French Franc	9.00	9.12	9.12	9.18
Japanese Yen	7.93	7.75	7.62	7.43
European Currency Unit	9.75	9.56	9.56	9.43

Interest bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals					
Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	356.85	6.70	Silver	4.04	0.087

* JD/Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 11/5/91

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.679	0.685
Sterling Pound	1.1688	1.1758
Deutsche Mark	0.3939	0.3983
Swiss Franc	0.4662	0.4690
French Franc	0.1165	0.1172
Japanese Yen*	0.4896	0.4925
Dutch Guilder	0.3497	0.3518
Swedish Krona	0.1099	0.1106
Italian Lira*	0.0532	0.0555
Belgian Franc	0.01919	0.01931

* per 100

Other Currencies		
Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7600	1.7800
Lebanese Lira*	0.072	0.0745
Saudi Riyal	.1803	.1803
Kuwaiti Dinar	-	-
Qatari Riyal	.1840	.1860
Egyptian Pound	.1900	.2050
Omani Riyal	1.7300	1.7700
UAE Dirham	.1832	.1850
Greek Drachma*	.3550	.3700
Cypriot Pound	1.4140	1.4435

* per 100

CAB Indices for Amman Financial Market*

Index	30/4/91 Close	8/5/91 Close
All-Share	113.62	113.53
Banking Sector	110.13	109.98
Insurance Sector	109.34	117.30
Industry Sector	118.22	118.20
Services Sector	123.31	122.11

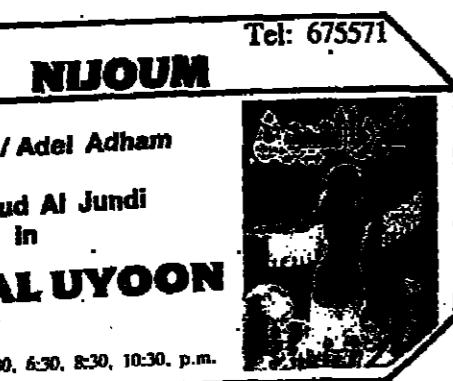
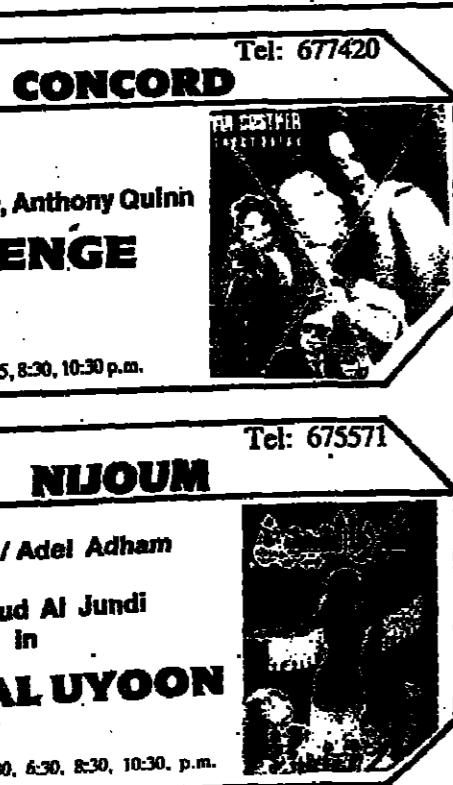
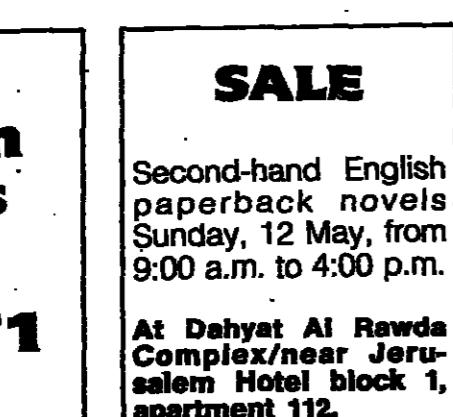
* December 31, 1990 = 100

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Jordan Times
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Social Security Corporation seeks 'good' ideas, partners for investments in Jordan

By Samir Shafiq
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) is more than willing to invest in expanding projects or in setting up new enterprises provided that they show high level of profitability or an acceptable level of about seven per cent for nationally-needed projects of socio-economic nature, SSC Director-General Mohammad Al Saqqaf said Saturday.

Mr. Saqqaf conceded that the scope of large-scale investments in Jordan was not wide. But he stressed that local or foreign investors can undoubtedly count on the SSC as a partner in capital for any viable and promising venture.

He cemented his offer by pointing out during an interview with the Jordan Times that the corporation was an independent institution "bent neither on government nor personal concerns in its investment policies but rather on solid economic analysis and factors."

The SSC, Mr. Saqqaf said, is governed by a 15-member board of directors headed by the minister of labour. The board, which includes Mr. Saqqaf as deputy board chairman, comprises also two members from the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce, two from the Amman Chamber of Industry, four from the Federation of Labour Unions and five from the ministries of labour, health, industry and trade, finance and the Central Bank of Jordan.

Mr. Saqqaf noted that the board meets regularly once a month and that, more importantly, neither himself nor the board have come under government pressure or directives to follow a certain investment path.

Banks

Unfolding the investment portfolio of the corporation, Mr. Saqqaf, who has served as the secretary-general of the ministries of supply and industry and trade said that SSC investments total about JD 400 million, of which about JD 136 million, or 34 per cent, were bank deposits.

Such an amount of liquidity was necessary to be maintained at all times to run daily operations and meet various payments to beneficiaries in addition to keeping sufficient funds for unforeseen developments, he said.

Mr. Saqqaf regretted that the SSC had so far been unable to establish a bank of its own due to stiff opposition he declined to identify but is suspected to be powerful banking circles.

Housing loans and development bonds

The second portion of investment is also about JD 136 million spread over housing loans of tens of private and public societies, companies, charities and institutions. Included in the amount also are holdings of government development bonds which, according to Mr. Saqqaf, finance nationally-needed development projects.

Shares and stocks

Investments in shares and stocks of public shareholding companies and equity participation in other enterprises ranked third in third place for a total of JD 96 million, or 24 per cent.

Mr. Saqqaf said that the third portion of investments covers nearly 100 industrial, agricultural and services entities. He further explained that the SSC was a very active element in boosting the trading at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) after the Gulf war having contributed JD 3 million in AFM turnover within only three weeks.

Hotels and resthouses

The fourth, "controversial," investment is in the tourism sector, which absorbed JD 24 million, about six per cent of total investments.

Estimating the market value of the 12 hotels and resthouses run by the SSC throughout Jordan at JD 60 million, Mr. Saqqaf described this type of investment as controversial because it continues to stir widely different views about the profitability of services rendered at the hotels and resthouses.

He affirmed that tourism investment yielded a net profit of JD 1 million last year and that prices at the SSC hotels and resthouses, which employ nearly 1,000 workers, were cheap.

However, the director-general said that the SSC was implementing a new strategy in this area where a strict high profitability standard would be applied. As such, he added, the three resthouses at Jerash, Zai and Ishaqeh are being offered for lease.

Mr. Saqqaf explained that certain skin diseases were only allowed by the German authorities for treatment in a place in Switzerland and at the Dead Sea. As such, the Germans made the spa hotel offer to the SSC noting that some profitable projects were set up on the other side of the Dead Sea.

Asked about the difference between holding "theoretical" posts at the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the "implementation" post at SSC, Mr. Saqqaf gave the example of a project to manufacture spare parts in Jordan.

Experience

Asked about the difference be-

ing the SSC head he realised that the project couldn't have a chance to succeed.

Finally, Mr. Saqqaf noted that the SSC targets maximising its investment income as much as possible or else it would be disastrous for the Kingdom in the future. He reaffirmed the readi-



Social Security Corporation (SSC)
Director-General Mohammad Al Saqqaf (right) says that prices at SSC's hotels and resthouses, such as Aqaba (top) and Dibeen (below) are really cheap and the facilities there fulfil a weekend's vaca-



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Brazilians celebrate fall of economy minister

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Brazilians toasted the departure of Zelia Cardoso de Mello, the economy minister who blocked most of their savings, sent the value of their wages crashing — and still failed to kill inflation.

"I was so happy to hear she was leaving," said Adail da Silva Cavane, enjoying a drink with friends at a pavement cafe Friday. "With Zelia you never knew what was coming tomorrow."

Raising her glass of beer, she said: "Here's hoping our cruzados are unblocked quickly," referring to Cardoso's first act as minister last year when she froze overnight 80 per cent of Brazil's money in bank accounts.

Cavane, a self-employed beautician, said her business slumped over the past year as the anti-inflationary measures of Car-

dozo's austerity programme plunged the country into a deep recession.

On Wednesday evening a tired Cardoso stepped down by the following day her entire economic team handed in their resignations, including central bank chief Ibrahim Eris.

Despite a price freeze in force since Jan. 31, prices have continued to rise by between five and 20 per cent a month. Cardoso blamed a package of fuel and electricity price rises announced at the same time but workers were unconvinced.

"The only thing frozen is salaries," said doorman Alexandre Gomes Oliveira, who supplements his salary worth \$165 a month by selling his wife's homemade snacks.

"Zelia said we should negotiate

wage increases. But our bosses just say accept what we offer or you're fired," he added.

In front of the local gas company

S. African police shoot white farmers during squatter clash

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South African police shot and wounded four white farmers Saturday during clashes between landowners and black squatters at a pro-apartheid stronghold.

Witnesses said trouble started shortly after midnight when about 2,000 whites, mainly supporters of the pro-apartheid Conservative Party (CP), gathered at a farm outside Ventersdorp to evict residents of a black squatter camp.

CP spokesman Andries Beyers said police opened fire as they stood in a line between the farmers and the squatters.

"Three farmers were wounded by birdshot while a fourth was shot in the stomach with sharp ammunition," he said.

Witnesses said 10 blacks were injured, some seriously, when balaclava-clad whites managed to evade police at Goedevonden Farm and attack a second squatter camp nearby.

They said most injuries were

from stab wounds. The attackers wrecked cars and makeshift houses in the camp before retreating.

The dispute between squatters and farmers started early this year when landless blacks settled on a farm which they were forcibly removed under apartheid laws several years ago.

Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok cut short a tour of black townships outside Johannesburg to fly to Ventersdorp, a CP bastion and national headquarters of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB - Afrikaner Resistance Movement).

AWB leader Eugene Terre Blanca has a farm outside the town in western Transvaal.

Police would not comment on the shooting, but Vlok confirmed that some farmers had been wounded. He said no one was killed.

Army reinforcements, some patrolling on horseback, were

called in to help police to keep the peace.

Witnesses said the farmers and their supporters refused to leave the outskirts of the squatter area and brown-shirted members of the AWB threatened journalists and onlookers.

Both the AWB, which demands a white-only homeland, and the CP strongly oppose President F.W. De Klerk's pledge to scrap race segregation laws by next month.

Vlok was inspecting the results of "Operation Stabilise," launched this week to end township violence and rescue South Africa's fragile peace process from collapse, when he decided to head for Ventersdorp.

Police reported that Johannesburg's townships were quiet following months of fighting between rival black factions which has killed about 150 blacks this month alone and at least 1,500 since August.

Vlok has poured extra security forces into the townships and on Thursday De Klerk banned weapons to try to stop the slaughter between supporters of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party of Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

The ban outraged Zulu leaders, whose followers insist on carrying a range of clubs, spears and shields as part of their cultural heritage. Buthelezi and other leaders vowed to defy it.

De Klerk excluded Zulu spears and ceremonial axes from the ban, but this displeased both sides. Inkatha leaders want the exclusion extended to all cultural weapons — the ANC wants both sides disarmed completely.

The ANC threatened to call off power-sharing talks with the government unless the government took steps by last Thursday to end the violence. It is understood to have extended the deadline by a week to monitor the success of "Operation Stabilise."

Soviet troops withdraw from Armenian village after ambush

MOSCOW (AP) — Soviet troops withdrew from the terrified Armenian village of Paravakar Saturday after firing warning shots from tanks and helicopters to force the villagers to give up their hunting rifles, Armenian officials said.

Scored of heavily-armed troops surrounded and disarmed the tiny village of 300 people Friday after Armenian militants ambushed a nearby troop column, killing one soldier and wounding eight, according to Soviet media reports.

Armenian officials described the military action against Paravakar as a reprisal for the ambush. It was unclear whether the troops believed villagers had participated in the ambush, which has the first major act of resistance by Armenian militants in two weeks of fighting along the tense, 1,000-kilometre border between Armenia and the neighbouring Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

At least 48 Armenians have died in a two-week campaign by Soviet troops and Azerbaijani riot police to disarm Armenian border settlements. Before Friday's ambush, there had been isolated incidents of sniper fire against the Soviets and Azerbaijanis, but no major resistance.

Bella Harutunian-Kozak, an

Armenian Interior Ministry spokeswoman, said the troops collected only five hunting rifles from Paravakar, which is along the border 140 kilometres north of Yerevan, the Armenian capital.

The soldiers initially did not believe that the five old rifles were all the weapons in the village, Mrs. Harutunian-Kozak said in a telephone interview.

"They insisted the village had heavy arms, such as grenade launchers, and they began firing from tanks and helicopters to scare the people," she said.

The soldiers first fired blanks, then changed to live ammunition to raise the pressure on the village. Windows were shattered throughout the hamlet and the roofs of several homes were damaged, but no casualties were reported, she said.

According to Soviet media accounts, Armenian militants using rifles and grenades ambushed two Soviet military trucks at dawn Friday in Akstafa province of northwest Azerbaijan, about 3 kilometres from the Armenian border.

Eight of the 14 soldiers riding in the trucks were wounded, and a ninth died before reaching a hospital. Two of the wounded were in critical condition, the Azerbaijani News Agency, Asas-Irada said.

Winnie Mandela trial ends; verdict expected next week

JOHANNESBURG (R) — The trial of anti-apartheid leader Winnie Mandela for kidnap and assault ended Friday with her lawyer asking the judge to ignore the prosecution's "mess of evidence" and acquit her on all charges.

Judge M.S. Stegmann adjourned until Monday when he is expected to start delivering his verdict, which could take several days to read.

"A consistent, logical story has been placed before your lordship (by Mrs. Mandela). Why must the mess of evidence ... placed before your lordship by the state witnesses be accepted?" attorney George Bizos asked the judge.

"We submit that she should be found not guilty and discharged on all counts."

A relieved-looking Mandela, dressed in a brightly-coloured tribal costume and turban, was hugged by her lawyers after Bizos ended his summing-up. The trial began on Feb. 4.

The state accuses Mandela, wife of African National Congress (ANC) Deputy President Nelson Mandela, of kidnapping four anti-apartheid activists from a church hostel two years ago and assaulting them in store rooms behind her home.

The charges against Mandela, her driver John Morgan and Xoliswa Falati, a housekeeper at the Methodist-run hotel, allege the four were abducted on suspicion of being police spies.

Prosecutor Jan Swanepoel said the activists were clearly held at Mandela's house under close watch by her bodyguards and that they had no chance to escape.

Even if it were to be conceded, which we don't, that they remained on the premises against their will, it has not been shown that Mrs. Mandela had knowledge that such a stay was against their will," he added.

On Sunday, the team is to cross the eastern Thai border to a Khmer Rouge guerrilla base inside Cambodia. On Monday, it is to inspect bases of the other groups in the guerrilla coalition — the forces of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front.

The team goes Tuesday to Phnom Penh to hear the government side.

France, Indonesia and the U.N. secretary-general — the main brokers of the Cambodian peace process — proposed the ceasefire to improve chances for an agreement at peace talks expected in Indonesia by early June.

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It is the first truce in 12 years of war.

Phnom Penh Prime Minister Hun Sen said his forces were remaining in their quarters.

U.N. team arrives to inspect Cambodian truce

BANGKOK (AP) — A United Nations military team travels to a Khmer Rouge guerrilla base Sunday to check adherence to a truce that appears to be holding in Cambodia despite accusations of violations.

The leader of the four-man team, Gen. Timothy Dubuque of Ghana, was to arrive in Bangkok Saturday.

"The purpose is to visit the military headquarters of each (Cambodian) faction for an on-the-spot review of the situation" since the truce started May 1, said a U.N. official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Other members of the team dispatched by U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar are French and Indonesian officers.

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Mandela and the others deny the charges, saying the four, including 14-year-old Stompie Seipei, came to stay at Mandela's house because they wanted to get away from the homosexual advances of the white minister in charge of the hostel.

Seipei died and Mandela's senior bodyguard, Jerry Richardson, was last year sentenced to hang for his murder.

Stegmann said Friday Mandela's driver had given contradictory, incoherent and improbable evidence.

"I am satisfied Morgan has deliberately set out to misinform us with untruths," he said.

In his final statement to the court, Bizos said that two of the complainants in the case, Kenneth Kgase and Barend Mono, had given contradictory and unsatisfactory evidence.

Bizos said that the prosecution had failed to prove that Kgase, Mono, Seipei and another activist had stayed at Mandela's house against their will.

"Even if it were to be conceded, which we don't, that they remained on the premises against their will, it has not been shown that Mrs. Mandela had knowledge that such a stay was against their will," he added.

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